United Nations

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, beginning official visit to Japan, urges that country to take more active role in building new United Nations and to help safeguard world peace.

+ Expert Commission on war crimes says it would welcome decision by Security Council or another international body to establish tribunal in relation to war crimes in former Yugoslavia.

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative for United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea meets with representative of Provisional Government and United Nations officials on his arrival in Asmara, Eritrea.

+ Outer Space Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, beginning its 1993 session at Headquarters, reviews application of major space technology over past year.

+ Economic and Social Council establishes 53-member Commission on Sustainable Development, as recommended by UNCED.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on an official visit to Japan, has urged that country to take a more active role in building the new United Nations and to help safeguard world peace.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa in Tokyo today, he praised legislation passed last year allowing Japanese troops to take part in United Nations peace-keeping operations. Mr. Boutros-Ghali emphasized that it was for the Government, people and Parliament of Japan to decide how to carry that process forward.

Since 1986, Japan has been the second largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget and a major donor to the specialized agencies, but "the international community expects even more of Japan", the Secretary-General said. "We need the democratization of international affairs", he said, noting that "such a system will need the more active involvement of Japan".

(more)

For information media--not an official record

The Secretary-General is expected to return to New York this weekend.

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The Commission of Experts on war crimes in the territory of the former Yugoslavia has said it would welcome a decision by the Security Council or another international body to establish a war crimes tribunal for crimes committed in that region. The five-member Commission was set up by the Security Council last year to investigate reports of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia.

In a recent interim report to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Commission said a tribunal on war crimes might be established by States choosing to combine their jurisdictions under the principle of universality. The Commission recalled that the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal following the Second World War was said to have derived its authority from such a combination of national jurisdictions of States.

The Commission said that it would accept an offer from the Canadian Government to provide a team to conduct further on-site investigations of the offences in the Vukovar area. While preliminary reports showed that grave breaches and other violations of international humanitarian law had been committed in the former Yugoslavia, tangible evidence of those violations must be secured in the form of testimonies, identification of victims, forensic or pathology reports, photographs and location maps. That was why the Commission's database on human rights violations must be completed as soon as possible, "since that alone can provide the foundation for the formulation of conclusions on the evidence of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia", the Commission said.

In a letter dated 9 February which accompanied the Commission's report, the Secretary-General told the Security Council that he had asked the Commission to continue its work on the database and that he would take the necessary steps for the creation of a trust fund to finance the Commission's work.

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Samir Sanbar, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER), arrived in Asmara, Eritrea, yesterday to take up his duties.

According to a United Nations spokesman, Mr. Sanbar met today with the Referendum Commissioner, Amare Tekle, to discuss preparations for the referendum process. He also met with the Deputy Foreign Secretary of the Provisional Government of Eritrea. The Foreign Secretary is away attending a meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Mr. Sanbar also met with the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and representatives of other United

Nations agencies, in the need to emphasize a unified integrated United Nations presence in Eritrea.

The referendum in Eritrea is expected to be completed by April. At present, 17 of 21 advance mission staff are in Asmara.

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The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, beginning its 1993 session at Headquarters today, reviewed major space activities carried out during the International Space Year (1992).

The Chairman of the Subcommittee, John Carver (Australia), called for priority consideration to be given to topics relating to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and matters relating to remote sensing, during the current session. He also stressed that more attention should be paid to the protection and preservation of the outer space environment, given its potential for adversely affecting the earth's environment.

Giving practical examples of the use of space technology, Mr. Carver said that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had used satellite imagery from commercial SPOT and Landsat spacecraft to identify high-fertility farmland areas for the resettlement of 350,000 Cambodian refugees. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) had also used about 1,000 small ground-level communication terminals to coordinate the activities of the 22,000 United Nations personnel supervising the return of the refugees.

During the Subcommittee's current session, which concludes on 28 February, it will also review the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82).

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The Economic and Social Council has established a 53-member Commission on Sustainable Development as one of its functional bodies, as recommended by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Acting without a vote, the Council decided that the Commission would meet annually for a period of two to three weeks. As a transitional measure, it would hold an organizational session from 24 to 26 February. Its first substantive session would be held at Headquarters from 14 to 25 June.

Other action taken by the Council included the selection of the themes of the high-level and coordination segments of the Council's substantive session, which will be held from 28 June to 30 July, in Geneva. The theme of the high-level segment will be "World Summit for Social Development, including the role of the United Nations system in promoting social development".

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